

led Aleman to fatal finale

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Penniless, depressed and convinced the Mafia was out to kill him, Jose Braulio Aleman, heir to a Cuban fortune, committed suicide in a final rampage that left a trail of death and blood among those he loved most.

The story Monday from the few friends Aleman confided in was of a man who had lost his money, his land holdings and his mental health.

The only son of the late Jose Manuel Aleman, a pre-Batista Cuban minister of education — whose career and fortune were clouded by charges of graft and corruption — was afraid of being killed by the Mafia. He believed his 1978 Congressional testimony, against underworld figure Santo Trafficante had marked him for life.

"He trusted very few people. He was convinced the Mafia was after him," said Eugenio Martinez, recently pardoned Watergate burglar, a close friend.

"In the last four or five years he had become almost a recluse because he was convinced the Mafia was going to retaliate against him because of his testimony," said Martinez, who had gotten Aleman his last job: car salesman at Anthony Abraham Chevrolet. Aleman lasted three weeks.

Aleman had seen his share of the family fortune — once estimated between \$29 million and \$200 million — dwindle away in efforts to fight former Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista and later Fidel Castro. Unable to meet mortgage pay-

ments, property taxes and upkeep, he had sold, one by one, land holdings that at one time included the Miami stadium, hotels and what is now Cape Florida in Key Biscayne.

Three months ago, unable to pay the rent on his apartment, he moved in with his mother, into the one-story bungalow the family had lived in for 17 years in a predominantly Latin neighborhood in central Miami.

Sunday morning, what was left of Jose Braulio Aleman's real world exploded into an uncontrollable rage directed against his family. In two hours Aleman took his own life and that of an elderly relative, and wounded three other relatives, including his six-year-old cousin.

Ironically, Monday he was to have set up yet another appointment with a psychiatrist. Aleman had cancelled four previous appointments.

Instead, Aleman's body lay at Caballero Funeral Home in Coral Gables Monday.

Laid next to him was his 69-year-old aunt, Maria Candarez. He shot her at close range twice — once in the neck, the other in the head. She died instantly.

Both will be buried today at Miami Memorial Park, 1661 SW 37 Ave. Funeral services are scheduled at 3 p.m.

Aleman killed her with the same semi-automatic 9mm handgun he turned on himself before Miami police SWAT officers got to him, according to the autopsy released Monday by the Dade Medical Examiner's Office.

Dr. Charles Welli, acting Dade medical examiner, said Aleman shot himself in the right temple an instant before he was hit by the police bullets. Aleman died from his own 9mm slug, Welli said.

Until the autopsy results were disclosed, it was believed Aleman had been killed by the SWAT officers' shots to his stomach.

"[Aleman] had fired shots at police, they fired back and missed the first time. He ran to a bedroom and

shot himself in the right temple...," Welli said. "He died almost instantly."

Miami Police Sgt. Jack Sullivan said police fired because they saw the hand holding the gun moving.

There were no traces of alcohol in Aleman's blood, Welli said.

Wounded were Sofia Ampudia, Aleman's 74-year-old aunt who was shot in the hands; cousin Maria Gonzalez, 36, shot in the neck; and her daughter Carina, 6, shot in the



Jose Braulio Aleman: Destitute and despondent.

"He just went crazy," said Juan Herrero Camejo, a former bodyguard of the dead man's father and a neighbor of the family. "He tore up the house in a rage," said Herrero Camejo, who helped clean up the house Monday.

"There was so much blood on the floor... everything was in shambles," he said. Herrero Camejo had seen Aleman grow from boyhood to adulthood and witnessed his final deterioration.

"There is no doubt in my mind he lost his mind.... It was too much for him — seeing himself with no means, no future, no friends and alone with his fears," said Herrero Camejo, one of the

ALEMAN/From 1B

few people Aleman seemed to trust. His fear stemmed from his Sept. 19, 1978, testimony before the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations. Aleman said Trafficante had told him that President John Kennedy would not be reelected, that he was going to get hit.

Trafficante, testifying the following day, denied the charge.

From that day on, Aleman believed he was on a Mafia hit list.

"He was studious by nature and liked solitude," said Martinez. "His fear pushed him into withdrawal from social life."

The fear became obsessive.

Friends said Aleman turned down a job as a traveling salesman because he believed the Mafia would take the opportunity to set him up under the guise of business deal.

Living became unbearable.

Sunday, the neighborhood where Aleman lived with his mother awoke to cries and shots. Police arrived at 7:18 a.m. and were met by the three wounded relatives who had bolted from the house.

Aleman fired twice during the two hours he held the Miami SWAT team at bay. When a pair of officers finally stormed the house, believing Aleman's aunt was still alive, they found her dead.

Moments later, they found Aleman and shot him. Hours later they learned their bullets did not kill him.

Autopsy: Aleman, not police, fired fatal shot

Photo from ALEMAN/9R